Castlemaine Naturalist

Sept. '99

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Adopt-a-Highway Project

On September 4 the club is commencing work on the Adopt-a-Highway Project which is situated between Sawmill Road on McKenzies Hill and the south end of the Castlemaine Golf Club.

A survey of the area will be carried out and some cleaning up done.

Meet at CHIRP at 1.30pm. We will return at approx. 3.30pm. Bags, vests and gloves will be supplied. Wear suitable clothing, including hat and boots. No children or dogs, please (we have given this undertaking as we will be working beside the highway).

Winter Bird List for Happy Valley

White-faced Heron
Pacific Black Duck
Maned (Wood) Duck
Little Eagle
Little Falcon (Aust. Hobby)
Masked Lapwing
Crested Pigeon
Domestic Pigeon (Rock Dove)
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
Long-billed Corella
Galah
Eastern Rosella
Crimson Rosella
Kookaburra
Welcome Swallow
Eastern Yellow Robin
Crested Shrike-tit
Grey Thrush
Willie Wagtail
Superb Blue wren
Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Brown Thornbill
Red Wattlebird
New Holland Honeyeater
Eastern Spinebill
Silver-eye
Mistletoe bird
Spotted Pardalote
Red-browed Firetail
Goldfinch
White-browed Scrub-wren
Pied Currawong
Common Bronzewing
White-winged Chough
Jacky Winter
Fantailed Cuckoo 25/7
Sparrow
Blackbird
Starling
Magpie
Australian Raven

Maureen and Ken Dredge

Southern Boobooks Report

Towards the end of July the second bird appeared at the Botanic Gardens site. I haven't managed to catch them "billing and cooing", but each visit finds them in closer proximity in the roosting tree. Usually by early September the female disappears, presumably to a nesting site which I have never been able to locate.

The number of pellets beneath the tree has increased, and they contain more bones and fur than during previous weeks, when the solitary bird seemed to be having a lean time on a diet of beetles.

Occasionally the ground beneath the tree was thick with possum droppings - enough to clog the soles of shoes as I searched for pellets! Indications are that there is a surge in the population of possums, or else a shortage of their food has made the cypress fruits very popular.

Shirley Parnaby

From BIRDS AUSTRALIA in-house magazine -

Owl Conservation

The problems of owl conservation in Australia were examined by Iain Taylor. Owls are intrinsically difficult to conserve because (as top predators) they are not common, they have specific nest requirements (large hollows), and it is difficult to obtain ecological information about them. Major conservation problems are lack of knowledge (of all species), habitat loss and degradation, and pollutants, such as anticoagulant rodenticides. Iain was scathing about most conservation plans for owls, describing them as having an inadequate knowledge base, being targeted at individual birds or pairs rather than at populations, and in being designed to maintain the status quo rather than allowing for population recovery. He recommended that Boobooks could be used as environmental monitors, and that Birds Australia should look at the possibility of starting a Boobook monitoring program.

Contributed by Chris Morris

Naturalists' Paradise

A highlight of our recent holiday to Queensland was our time at Cania Gorge, situated north of Monto, just off the Burnett Highway in Central Queensland. The camping ground is situated approximately 20 km up the gorge. You are surrounded by wonderful hills, rocky outcrops and gullies. During the day Whip-tail Wallabies and small Grey Kangaroos grazed in the Park (NO feeding of wildlife was permitted, so they went about their business and ignored you.)

At night the Betongs appeared and could be watched feeding under a bright light in one particular spot. Rainbow Lorikeets, King Parrots, Kookaburras and White-rumped Miners called from the trees all day long.

About 500m from the edge of the Park was a waterhole and twice we were able to sit and watch the Platypus feeding.

I managed to make a list of 50 different bird species (which is pretty good for me). Most memorable were Red-backed Wren, Azure Kingfisher, Scarlet Honeyeater and Eastern Whip-bird.

We had many walks through open forest, rain forest and along ridges, and bird sounds were with us all the time . It was a truly magical place, not to be missed if you are up that way.

Margaret Willis

61 Hunter Street Birds, August.

"Spring is in the air", and the Striated Pardalote is inspecting the nest box almost daily. The Crimson Rosellas are also appearing regularly to compare the attractions of their box with the chimney cowl on our neighbours' roof. They do this every year without fail, but have never been known to choose the chimney - so far.

The grevilleas are attracting Eastern Spinebills and New Holland and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters. A Horsfields Bronze-cuckoo has been heard in the bush area nearby. Noisy Masked Lapwings seem to be visiting the creek flat behind our block and often call during the night.

Recently the Mistletoebird which now seems a permanent resident in the eucalypts at the rear of the garden has been seen and heard in the front garden daily. There are camellias, daphne, pink ti-tree and grevillea in bloom, but I have never been able to observe him feeding at any of these plants (I presume their only food is mistletoe?)

On August 24 a pair of Indian Mynahs arrived to my dismay. They weren't made particularly welcome by the local birds, either, as first a Weebill chased them, assisted later by Sparrows. Later the Wattlebirds also found them and set out in pursuit as well.

Shirley Parnaby

Have you seen these plants?

Over the next few months I will be taking part in the Botanical Guardians project. The project is organised by DNRE, and aims to collect information about rare and endangered plants. For such plants a count of the population, a record of the habitat (e.g. other plants, topography, soil etc.), and threats to its existence (e.g. weeds, trail bikes etc.) will be made. Photographs of the area will be taken.

I am particularly interested in the Crimson Spider Orchid. If you find any this season I would be pleased to hear about it.

Other plants that are on the rare and endangered list, and which are known to occur in Castlemaine district, are Clover Glycene, *Tabacina latrobeana,* Leafy Templetonia *Templetonia stenophylla,* Elphinstone Grevillea *Grevillea obtecta,* Ballantinia *Ballantinia antipoda,* Deane's Wattle *Acacia deanei,* Dwarf Geebung *Persoonia chamaepeuce,* Brooker's Gum *Eucalyptus brookeriana,* Lanky Buttons *Leptorhyncus elongatus,* Spiny Rice-flower *Pimelea spinescens,* Emerald-lip Greenhood *Pterostylus smaragdyna,* Hairy Tails *Pilotus erubescens* and Scented Bush-pea *Pultenea graveolens.*

Emerald-lip Greenhood is similar in appearance to the Tall Greenhood but the flowers are larger and more distinctly striped. Emerald-lip Greenhood is a more robust plant, the hood being about 2 cm long compared with about 1.5cm for the Tall Greenhood, and it also tends to flower earlier.

Information about any of the rare plants would be welcomed. I can be contacted on 5472 3124.

Ern Perkins.

Observations

- First cuckoo, a Fan-tailed Cuckoo, heard at Barkers Creek on Wed. Aug 4. Rita Mills.
- Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes back at Blakeley Rd. Aug. 5, but haven't been seen again as yet (28/8). Rita Mills
- A Speckled Warbler and a Southern Whiteface were seen by Stephen Garnett at the Eureka Mine.
- Frank Duffin reported having seen two Magpie Geese on Cairn Curran and at Guildford. He wonders if they are the same pair. Discussion at the outing the next day speculated whether they might have escaped from Werribee, or whether they might have even been released.
- Frank also reported having spotted an Echidna just north of Maryborough, and told travellers to Melbourne to watch out for the kilometre of so of Hardenbergias in flower in plantings along the road near Diggers Rest.

- Geraldine Harris told of a group of seven foxes together in a paddock at Barkers Creek.
- Chris Morris spotted a flock of 15 Varied Sitellas on his Bird Atlassing block in Poverty Gully, as well as some Crested Shrike-tits.
- Maureen Dredge told us that Ken had reported seeing a Brolga sitting on eggs at Lake Goldsmith near Beaufort.
- "On August 5 a party of Brown-headed Honeyeaters, about 15 - 20 in all arrived in the leafless plum tree. They sat as many as 5 together on a branch, preening themselves and one another. When a bird of prey (unidentified) circled overhead they took alarm with a chattering call, but did not all disperse. At first I did not suspect they were honeyeaters, their beaks were too short, but then I saw a faint horseshoe shape around the back of their necks." Frank Carpenter.
- An injured Tawny frogmouth was found on the lawn in Turner St. next to the Kaweka Sanctuary. It is unclear what had happened to it, but Frogmouths have a habit of hunting near street lights, and do occasionally get hit by cars because of this habit. It was one of a pair which has been seen regularly at that spot.
- The Dusty Miller *Spyridium parvifolium* on the ridge at the north end of Youngman's track has taken quite a battering during the drought. In fact both patches in the Wattle Flat bush have fared badly, but during the U3A walk on and near Dirty Dicks Gully track between Colles Rd and the Garfield Wheel on Wednesday 25th several flourishing patches were found, and in full flower. Rita Mills
- Ern and Leslie Perkins have found over the last few weeks - a Spotted Quail-thrush on the Dingo farm Road, Rose Robins at Wattle Flat and Ern reported that a population of Ballentinias numbering some 250000 were found during the survey - but, as the plants are only tiny, that amounts to a very small patch. Ballentinia only grows on wet mossy rock faces. Also he reported that Pimelea linifolia (Slender Riceflower) is in full flower in gullies on Mt. Tarrengower (29/8) and well worth a visit.
- Maggie Oliver watched Brahminy Kites swooping on six cavorting Dolphins in the Bay of 1770, which is a small bay N.E. of Bundaberg, where Captain Cook called to make repairs to the Endeavour,.
- At the last count (28/8) the bird list for the outing to Kara Kara (except for an overnight stay on Saturday by Maureen and Ken, the campout became an outing only because of flooding) was 58 species over 3 hours. A full report will be in the October Castlemaine Naturalist.
- At the lower Teddington Reservoir on 28/8 there were a great number of fish on the surface of the water, with their backs or bellies above the water level. At first we thought they were trout, but as more and more appeared we began to suspect European Carp. Ken, Maureen, Hans, Ann , Simon and Rita,

1999 Workshop series

Box-Ironbark Appreciation

Sunday 12 Sept. 1999

Discover the richness and diversity of these highly threatened forests in an interactive workshop with Ron Hateley, Creswick School of Forestry, Rob Price, D.N.R.E. and Elvyne Hogan, Trust for Nature.

The Workshop will be conducted in the Maryborough area on public and private land. Details will be available for registered participants.

BYO lunch. Light refreshments and notes provided.
Cost: $20, or $10 concession.

For registration and further information contact
Creswick Landcare Centre, pH. 5345 2200

PLANTS OF THE MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE

Slender Riceflower, *Pimelea linifolia*

In this district the plant usually grows about 30 - 60cms tall. It is upright with a single main stem, but can have several branches, each of which has a terminal head of a cluster of white tube shaped flowers which have four lobes and two stamens. Occasionally they are nodding but the only time I have seen that in this district has been in the Maldon/Walmer area. The leaves are glabrous, narrow-lanceolate and dull green in colour. The stems are usually reddish, and the four bracts under the flower heads are often reddish, too. They are broader than the leaves.

It is widespread in the district and mainly found in the forested areas It usually flowers from the end of July to early November in this district

It is similar to P. humilis, the Common Riceflower, which is smaller, later flowering (Sept - Dec. - overlapping the flowering of P. linifolia) and has smooth bluish green leaves. The plant is many-stemmed and usually only 15 - 30 cm high. .

The bracts in P. humilis are 4 - 6, and similar to the leaves, but broader and silky inside. The young shoots are very hairy

Our childhood name for both species was Bread and Butter and our corniest joke was that we wouldn't starve in the bush because we had Bread and Butter and Eggs and Bacon!

References -

The Forgotten Forests, VNPA

Wildflowers of Bendigo Bendigo F.N.C.

Collins Field Guide to the Plants and Wildflowers of South-eastern Australia, Jean Galbraith.

Handbook to Plants of Victoria, J.H.Willis

Rita Mills

FROM THE BUSINESS MEETING

The V.F.N.C.A. has notified member groups of the Australian Naturalists Network that the 3rd issue of the Newsletter is due in October. They need some information from us, which the committee will deal with, but they have also notified us that enamel Town Entry Logos are now available, and also car stickers. The enamel signs are $40 each, and the car stickers will be about 75c each, but if ordered in bulk may be as low as 50c. There will be an example at the meeting. They are also making green polo shirts available with the logo on the pocket. They will be quite reasonably priced and available to the clubs. We need to notify them by the end of September if we require any of the above.

PROPOSED GET TOGETHER

The problem of distributing the signs brought the suggestion of a Network Get-together in July/August 2000 in Alice Springs, as the Alice is central and a region of interest to Naturalists. The Logo could also be officially launched then if that was considered appropriate. A Subcommittee was formed to investigate the possibility of the event taking place, and if sufficient interest was shown, to proceed with arrangements.

When Dick Southcombe, the Project convenor, was in Alice Springs recently he contacted various people and organisations and they were quite enthusiastic and ready to help. (more details of the people and organisations contacted are available at the meeting).

At least two weeks of day excursions in conventional cars, two 4WD only day excursions and 5 4 WD only 2-3 day camping trips have been listed. Schedules of 4 WD safaris for about 20 people for 4 - 10 days costing $80 - $90 per day are also proposed. The Desert Park has been offered for a venue if needed. Etc. .etc.! Dick has gone very thoroughly into the possibilities.

The people who showed interest at the V.F.N.C.A. Campout are hoping there will be sufficient support to make the Get-together happen.

We are asked to complete the order form sent with the information, and it has to be returned to the V.F.N.C.A. by the 30th of Sept. Please let Barbara know as soon as possible if you are interested.

CFNC PROGRAMME

General Meetings Are held in the Uniting church (UCA) hall, at 8.00pm on the second Friday of each month, except January. Entrances to the car parks are beside the Art Gallery and beside the Church building in Lyttleton Street. **Excursions** leave promptly at times stated, usually on the Saturday after the general meeting. There are NO excursions on TOTAL FIRE BAN days.

Business Meetings are held at 38 Campbell Street on the 4th Thursday of each month, except December, at 7.30pm. All members are invited to attend.

VISITORS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME TO CLUB MEETINGS AND EXCURSIONS.

Sat. Sept. 4 **Adopt-a-Highway Cleanup and Assessment.** Leave CHIRP 1.30. Details P1.

Sun Sept. 5. **Fryerstown area.** Excursion with Ballarat FNC. Leader is Norma Dickerson. Leave 27 Doveton St. at 10am, or meet at the Big Red Gum at Guildford at 10.15. Take lunch , afternoon tea.

Sat. Sept 5. **Working Bee, Barfold Gorge.** Meet at the bridge over the river at Barfold at 10 am. Main object of the day is weeding. Organiser, Elvyne Hogan.

Wed. Sept. 8 **Spring Walk** Leave at 27 Doveton St at 4pm. Wattle Flat. Leaders K and M. Dredge. These local walks last approximately one hour, and we get back into town by 5.30pm.

Fri. Sept. 10 **Microscopy** Peter Sansom and Ern Perkins. UCA hall. 8pm. This will be a hands-on session where we will be learning how to use a microscope. If anyone has a power board they can lend for this evening please bring it and a lead, also if anyone can bring a low powered microscope (10x - 40x) this would also be appreciated.

Sat Sept. 10 **Terrick Terrick.** All day excursion . Leave 27 Doveton St at 9.30am. Take lunch etc., and don't forget the binocs! Leader M. Oliver.

Wed. Sept. 15 **Third Spring walk.** Leave 27 Doveton St at 4pm. Harcourt. Leader M. Oliver.

Wed - Sun 15 - 19 Sept. VFNCA Campout at Mildura.

Wed. Sept 22 **Spring Walk** Meet 27 Doveton St. at 4pm Barkers Creek. Leader is R. Mills.

Wed. Sept. 29 **Spring Walk** Meet 27 Doveton St. The Monk. Leader is G. Broadway.

Oct 2 - 17 **Mamunya Festival.** The Club will be leading walks in the Box/Iron bark forests on Oct. 3, 10 (with Doug Ralph) and 17, leaving the Tourist information Centre opposite Castle Motel at 1.30pm. Finish about 4 pm. Bring afternoon tea.

Thurs. Oct. 7 **Annual Broom Pull** Butterfly area of the Botanic Gardens. Meet Froomes Rd/Mary St. at 9.30am. Details in CN258.

Don't forget the free lunch to follow!

Fri. Oct. 8 **Birds and Words from History and Literature.** Speaker is Peter Allan of Rochester. UCA hall at 8pm.

Fri. Oct. 8. **Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture, "Insect Camouflage Mechanisms",** speaker is John Landy. Ballarat F.N.C. have invited the C.F.N.C. to join them at 8 o'clock at the Ballarat Horticultural Centre, cr. Gillies and Gregory Sts, Wendouree.

Sat Oct. 9. **Kamarooka Forest** Peter Allan will lead us to a good place for bird nests in the forest. All day outing. We will be combining with Echuca BOCA.

Fri. Nov. 12 **African Parks.** John Turnbull. UCA hall, 8pm

Sat Nov 13. **Werribee.** Birding excursion by bus. Details later

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Committee M,Dredge (President) Ph 5470 6474, E. Perkins (V.P. and Grievance Officer), B. Maund (Sec.) ph. 5472 4354, M. badminton (treas.) R. Mills (N/L Ed. and P.O.), G. Broadway, J. Turnbull, M. Oliver, C. Morris, K. Turner, Z . Thomas.

Subscriptions - Ordinary Membership: Single $22, Family, $30

Pensioner or student: Single $18, Family $24

Supporting: $31

The subscription now covers postage of the 'Castlemaine Naturalist'.

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